ওঁ নমঃ ভগবতে নারায়ণ গুরবাত্রেশ্বরায়
নমঃ ভগবতে সিদ্ধ কালীশ্বরায়

আন্দুল চৌধুরী বাড়ি

اندرول چودھری اقامتگاہ

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आन्दुल, हावड़ा, पः वः
Andul, Howrah, W.B.
माघ 03, शक संवत् 1946
23rd January, 2025

Throughout the vast expanse of Bharatvarsha i.e. India, myriad folklore and legendary tales recount the discovery of the mythical *sparsha-mani* (*parash pathhar* / philosophers' stone). Some of these narratives have gained widespread popularity among the general populace, while others have not come to light in the full glare of publicity. Among these, the notable documented account of acquisition of the *sparsha-mani* of the Datta Chowdhury *zamindar* family of Andul in West Bengal, stands out.

Background:

The Datta Chowdhury family of Andul, located in present-day Howrah district of West Bengal, India, traces its ancestral lineage to the state of Uttar Pradesh. Purushottama Datta, son of Shivadatta, was among the ten *dvijas*—comprising five *sagnika* Brahmins and five *yagnika* Kshatriyas—who migrated to the prosperous land of Gauda at the invitation of King Adisura during the month of Ashwin (September–October) in the Saka year 804, corresponding to 882 CE. In Hindu culture, Ashwin is revered as an auspicious month, particularly for initiating new ventures or conducting sacred rituals. This period, celebrated as a time of harvest and thanksgiving, is deeply intertwined with India's agrarian traditions. The Datta clan is affiliated with the *Bharadvaja gotra*.

Eleven generations after Purushottama Datta was Murari Datta Biswas, whose younger son, Devadas (Tekari) Datta, migrated from their ancestral residence in Bally to settle on the western bank of the Sarasvati River in Andul, within the then Muzaffarpur *pargana* (presently Howrah district). Devadas established himself as a *zamindar* in the region, with his administrative acumen and landholding status earning him recognition from the Bengal Sultan Sikandar Shah (reign: 1358–1390), which conferred upon him the title of 'Chowdhury' for the *pargana*. Of Devadas's two sons, namely Ratnakar Datta and Ramakanta Datta, historical records prominently feature Ratnakar, who emerged as a significant figure due to his possession of the legendary *sparsha-mani*.

This *sparsha-mani*, though differing slightly in appearance from other stones, is not particularly striking to behold. Consequently, it is nearly impossible to recognise it at first glance by ordinary means. The sole method of identifying this stone lies in its extraordinary property: when brought into contact with any base metals like Copper (Cu), Iron (Fe), Tin (Sn), Aluminium (Al), Zinc (Zn), etc., it transmutes the latter into Gold (Au), thus increasing its density, because Gold (Au) has the highest density among the said base metals.

Note 01: A metal's density depends on its atomic mass and how closely its atoms are packed in its structure. Gold's combination of a high atomic number (79), large atomic radius, and tightly packed atomic arrangement makes it significantly denser than the base metals mentioned above, resulting in its higher weight for the same volume.

Main body:

In this context, our initial insights are derived from a book 'दत्त बंश माला' (*Dutta Vansa Mala*) authored by Baboo Kedar nath Dutt Bhaktivinod (1838-1914), a descendant of the said Datta lineage. This book exists in two editions. The first was published on 20 December 1875 CE, during his tenure as the Dy. Magistrate of the then Araria subdivision under the then district of Purnea in the state of Bihar. The second edition followed on 12 March 1900 CE. While the author makes a passing reference to the *sparsha-mani* in the first edition, he elaborates upon it in considerable detail in the second. Notably, in the first edition, he acknowledged that his information was originally gleaned from a compendium authored by an earlier chronicler.

In the first edition of the book, he writes –

रत्नाकरस्त्त तत्पुत्रो लेभे रत्नं मनोहरम्।
जान्हवी कृपया साक्षात् दुर्लभं भारते किल॥

Purport (by Kedar nath Dutt Himself):

The son of Tekari, Ratnakara, while performing his evening rituals along the banks of the Ganga at dusk, discovered that his *kosha-kushi* (ritual utensils) transformed into gold upon contact with a *sparsha-mani*. Believing the transformed objects to belong to someone else, he cast the golden *kosha-kushi* into the waters of the Ganga and replaced them with another set. When those, too, turned to gold, he realised it was indeed a *sparsha-mani*. Recognising it as a divine blessing from *Jahnavi* (Ganga), he accepted it with profound reverence. Blessed with extraordinary wealth, Ratnakara's fortune soon became a subject of widespread renown. However, upon receiving a directive from the Emperor of Delhi to surrender the *sparsha-mani*, Ratnakara embarked on a journey by boat. Upon reaching the vicinity of the village of Guptipara, he faced a moral dilemma. Deeming it improper for such a divine gift to fall into the hands of outsiders, he made the momentous decision to surrender both his life and the *sparsha-mani* to the sacred waters of the Ganga. Such is the account preserved in the chronicles of the ghataka.

English Equivalent (by Chaudhury Dhruba Dutta):

His (Devadas / Tekari) son Ratnakara came into possession of an exquisite gem, granted by the divine grace of Ganga – a treasure of unparalleled rarity in the land of Bharata (India).

In the second edition Bhaktivinod Kedar nath Dutt elaborates in greater detail upon the account of his forefather, Chowdhury Ratnakara Datta, and the discovery of the mythical *sparsha-mani* associated with him. In the fifth chapter (आन्दुल वास) of the book, he wrote —

देवदाससुतो रत्नाकरस्तस्य पितामहीम्।
बालकोऽपि वसन् तत्र सेवयामास शुद्धधीः ॥
स च सप्तदशे वर्षे गङ्गास्नानरतः अभवत्।
एकदा प्राप गङ्गायामेकं स्पर्शमणिं शुभम् ॥
दृष्टा समणिसौन्दर्यं नीतवान् तन्निजालये।
स्थापयामास तल्लोहपात्रे पितामहीगृहे ॥
अभवल्लोहपात्रं तत्स्वर्णपात्रं ततोऽचिरात्।
ज्ञात्वेदं तद्गुणं वृद्धा गोपयामास रत्नकम् ॥
ऐश्वर्यमतुलं लेभे मणिशक्तिप्रसादतः।
देवदासस्ततः काले लेभे स्वर्गं स्वपुण्यतः ॥
आन्दूले कृतवान् श्राद्धं देवदासस्य धीमतः।
रत्नाकरो द्विजान् दत्त्वा विपुलं स्वर्णरौप्यकम् ॥
क्रमशो मणिसम्पर्कं ज्ञात्वा तस्यारयस्तदा।
सम्राजं ज्ञापयामास तद्वार्त्तां गौडनायकम्॥
नाजिरस्तद्वचः श्रुत्वा प्रेरयामास सैनिकान्।
आनेतुं तन्मणिं रत्नाकराद्दत्ताद्बलान् वै ॥
रत्नाकरस्ततो धीमान् चिन्तयामास चेतसि।
देवदत्तं मणिं म्लेच्छनृपाय दीयते कथम् ॥
दास्यामि यदि नो रत्नं यवनाः बलदुर्मदाः।
घातयिष्यन्ति मां मूढाः ह्यस्मिन्ग्रामे सबान्धवान् ॥
अतः स मणिमादाय सैनिकैः सहितास्तदा।
गत्वा दूरं स वै दत्तः पपात जाह्नवीजले ॥
काञ्चने नगरे प्राप्ते म्लेच्छेभ्यो दर्शयन्मणिम्।

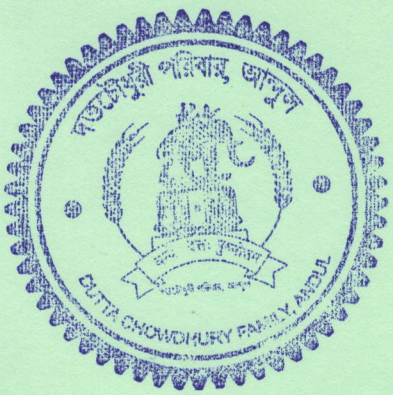
समणिः सलिले मग्नो बभूव दत्तनन्दनः ॥
तद्वार्त्तां सैनिकात् प्राप्य राजा तुष्णीं बभूव ह।

English Equivalent (by Chaudhury Dhruba Dutta):

Ratnakara, the son of Devadas, lived with his grandmother in his childhood (in Bally of present-day Howrah district, WB). Despite being a young boy, he served her with a pure and devoted mind. At the age of seventeen, he developed a habit of regularly bathing in the holy river Ganga. One day, during his bath, he discovered a *sparsha-mani* in the waters of the river. Fascinated by the beauty of the stone, he took it to his home and placed it in an iron vessel kept in his grandmother's house. Soon after, the iron vessel transformed into a golden one due to the miraculous properties of the stone. Realizing its immense power, his grandmother decided to safeguard it carefully. The family gained unparalleled wealth through the blessings of the stone's power. Over time, Devadas, by virtue of his own good deeds, attained heaven. Ratnakara, in memory of his father, performed the *shraddha* ceremony in Andul. He generously gifted gold and silver in abundance to the Brahmins. Gradually, news of the miraculous stone reached Ratnakara's enemies. They informed the ruler (his contemporary Bengal Sultan) of Gauda about it. Upon hearing, the king immediately sent his soldiers with orders to retrieve it from Ratnakara, by force if necessary. Wise Ratnakara pondered deeply and thought, "How can the sacred stone, bestowed by divine grace, be handed over to a ruler who is impure (non-Hindu) in His conduct? If I do not hand over the stone, the soldiers of the oppressive king will destroy me and my family in this village," he reasoned. Thus, taking the stone with him and accompanied by the soldiers, he journeyed far away and ultimately threw it into the waters of the Ganga. As the stone reached the sacred waters of Ganga near the Kanchhannagara, it vanished beneath the waves, never to be seen again. When the soldiers informed the king about what had transpired, he remained silent, unable to act further.

Note 02: This very incident has subsequently been referenced by several authors in their works, among whom the most noteworthy are as stated below:

1. Vaidyanath Mukhopadhyay, *Kingvadantir Pathor* - Anandamela Magazine (Ananda Bazar publisher, 1983).
2. Atulkrishna Datta Chowdhury, *Amar Gramer Katha* (Calcutta, 1944).
3. Hemotpaul Chaudhuri, *Dutta Chaudhuri Ancestry* (Pothi.com, Bangalore 2022).



Chaudhury Dhruba Dutta